

**CULTURAL CHANGE REFLECTED IN ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* DRAMA (1949): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**



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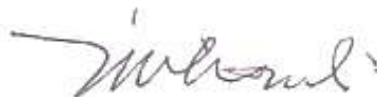
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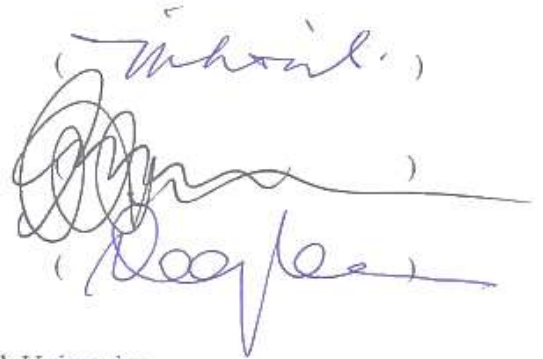
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Surakarta, 30 Maret 2017

The Researcher



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## **CULTURAL CHANGE REFLECTED IN ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* DRAMA (1949): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini adalah tentang perubahan budaya yang tercermin dalam drama *Death of a Salesman* karya Arthur Miller (1949) yang dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan Sosiologis. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi elemen-elemen perubahan budaya, untuk menggambarkan bagaimana perubahan budaya yang digambarkan, untuk mengungkapkan mengapa Arthur Miller memberikan keprihatinannya dalam isu-isu perubahan budaya dalam drama *Death of a Salesman* berdasarkan pendekatan Sosiologis. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam penelitian kualitatif. Data primer dari penelitian ini adalah drama karya Arthur Miller berjudul *Death of a Salesman* yang diterbitkan pada tahun 1949, sementara data sekunder dari penelitian ini adalah sumber lain yang terkait dalam studi ini, seperti: referensi-referensi online, dan beberapa buku yang mendukung penelitian ini. Peneliti menarik tiga kesimpulan dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, perubahan budaya yang terjadi pada elemen-elemen perubahan budaya seperti perubahan pada peralatan, sistem mata pencaharian, organisasi dan bahasa. Kedua, perubahan-perubahan budaya yang digambarkan dalam drama melalui struktur antara lain plot, karakter, peristiwa, dan gaya bahasa. Ketiga, alasan yang mendasari penulis ingin menyampaikan keprihatinannya tentang perubahan pandangan masyarakat tentang American Dream yang telah melenceng dari norma-norma dan nilai-nilai yang diwariskan oleh nenek moyang.

Kata Kunci: Perubahan Budaya, Elemen-elemen perubahan budaya, Sociology Sastra.

### **ABSTRACT**

This study is about the Cultural Change Reflected in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman Drama* (1949), which is analyzed by using sociological approach. The objectives of this study are to identify elements of cultural change, to depict how culture change is happened, to reveal why Arthur Miller gives his concerns on the issues of cultural change in the drama *Death of a Salesman* based on Sociological approach. This study belongs to qualitative research. The primary data from this study is a drama by Arthur Miller titled *Death of a Salesman*, published in 1949, while the secondary data from this study is another source involved in the study, such as: references online, and some books that support this research. The researcher draws three conclusions in this study. First, the cultural change that occur in the elements of cultural change as the change of equipment, livelihood systems, kinship and system of organizations, and language. Second, the cultural changes that portrayed in the play through the structure include a plot, characters, events, and style. Thirdly, the reason of the author to give concern about changes in people's views of the American Dream that has deviated from the norms and values inherited from our ancestors.

Keywords: Cultural Change, Elements of Culture, Sociology of literature.

## 1. Introduction

The study about *Death of a Salesman* (1949) had been done in some approaches with different subject of study. In the field of language there is a research about context of maxim (Triyatun,2013). In the field of psychological approach there are research about the inner conflict of the main character (Raudhina, 2011), related to the obsession of the main character (Karim, 2013), and study about moral choice of the main character (Pratiwi, 2013).The other study focused in capitalist society (Khodambashi, 2015) and lost culture of the the main character (Mamet, 2015) which are related with the theme about cultural change using Sociological Approach.

One of the social conditions of society is the cultural change. Changes in the culture of the society is called the cultural change as stated by Horton & Hunt (1984). This dynamic process of society enhances cultural with refreshment and for every generation a new culture than for the previous. Dessier & Cams in Dua (2013) stated that cultural change is the modification or discontinuance of existing 'tired'and 'tested' procedures transmitted to us from the culture of the past as well as the introduction of the new procedures. According to Koentjaraningrat (2000:203) the cultural change is the process of shifting, subtraction, addition, and the development of elements in a culture. In other word, a cultural change is the dynamic that occurs as a result of clashes between elements of different cultures.

Literature, as a form of culture,does not just describe the creative imagination that is built on the idea the author. However, it is also a reflection of a society (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972). By becoming a reflection of society, literature became a medium to express the various problems faced by the community. A copyright literature as a result of human work can not be separated from the social conditions surrounding communities. Literature often placed as a social portrait. He reveals the social conditions of society at a particular time.

One of the authors, who adapted the problem of cultural change, is Arthur Miller.Arthur Miller wrote his play *Death of a Salesman* in 1949 when America had suffered from World War II. However, the play shows that Miller interested in the influences of the past.Arthur Miller addresses cultural change in *Death of a*

*Salesman* because he wanted to reveal about the cultural change that had been occurred since the Great Depression in America.

*Death of a Salesman* is a play about a social tragedy and also individuals who demonstrate a change in culture. It can be seen from the main character in this story is Willy. He is one of a group of middle-class neurotic trapped in a big city. In *Death of a Salesman* he describes cultural changes, which occurred in the 19th century. He also explained the reality of the social and cultural changes implicit. He made every character in his work so realistically with problems that usually occur in our society. This play reflects the social life in 1949 at the elite community. Arthur Miller wrote the play realistic and beautiful. The second is the author of interests with Willy and Biff charismatic in years.

Based on illustration above, the writer want to analyze this play using Sociological Approach entitled **Cultural Change Reflected in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman Drama (1949): A Sociological Approach.**

Problem statements of this study are formulated in the questions below: What are the indicators of cultural change in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*? How cultural change depicted in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*? And why does Arthur Miller address cultural change in *Death of a Salesman*?

While the objective of the study are to describe the indicators of cultural change in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, to describe how cultural change is depicted in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and to reveal the reason why the author addresses cultural change in *Death of a Salesman*.

## **2. Research Method**

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research, which is the result of the data is a written data. The object of the study are formal object and material object. Formal object of the study is some books which discuss about cultural change and material object of the study is *Death of a Salesman* drama script which is written by Arthur Miller. The type of data in *Death of a Salesman* drama consist of words, phrases, and sentences which are used to analyze the drama. There are two types of data sources which are needed to conduct this

research they are primary data source and secondary data source. The technique of data collection the writer used in this study is library research by collecting and selecting both of primary and secondary data source compatible with the problem statement and objectives of the study. In order to analyze *Death of a Salesman* drama the writer uses sociological of literature and applies it using descriptive analysis which concerns to make some interpretation of dealing with the drama.

### **3. Analysis and Discussion**

#### **3.1 The Main Findings**

The main finding of this research is the cultural change that happened in the drama *Death of a Salesman*. The first finding is the change of the elements of culture. The second finding is the depiction of cultural change and the third is the reason why Arthur Miller gave concern in cultural change issues.

##### **3.1.1 Elements of Culture**

The cultural change that found in *Death of a Salesman* is about the changes of the elements of cultural. The researcher found four of elements of cultural change shown in *Death of a Salesman*, they are tools and equipment life, livelihood system, system of kinship and social organization, and language.

##### **3.1.1.1 Tools and Equipment Life**

First, the changes in Tools and Equipment life is the productive tools. The changes is the use of modern tools to help the character to do her house work. Refrigerator, washing machine and vacuum cleaner are tools that usually used in the house at twenty's century.

Second change is clothes. Clothes is the things that people wear to cover their bodies and that are usually made from cloth. The change of the clothes is the jacket that Willy wears. Willy has wear the jacket long time so the jacket became worn.

Third change is housing. House is the buildings used as a place to stay for a certain period of time. Willy has lived in the same house for the last twenty-five years. The house once set apart from other homes, now it is surrounded by apartment buildings, which makes Willy feel closed in.



Fourth change is tools of transportation. In their movement, people need tools to help them and it were called by tools of transportation. The changes shown in Willy's car. The car has been used for several years so it becomes old and broken.

#### 3.1.1.2 Livelihood system

Willy Loman as the main character has a job as a salesman. Before Great Depression, Willy was a success salesman. It is shown with a car that Willy bought in 1928. However, after that time, Willy performance in sales was decrease and finnaly he became a bankrupt salesman.

#### 3.1.1.3 The System of Kinship and Social Organization

Kinship system is the rules used to regulate the classification of people who belong to the relatives. Kinship system is the existence of social institutions is not separated from the norm in society. Norms shown in *Death of a Salesman* about the respect of Biff and Happy to Willy. When they were young, the respect and adore their father very much. As the time change, Biff and Happy found that their father as not good as their thought, they dare to argue their father.

Value is a good thing and is considered important by the community. One of the strongest display of false values in the drama is the idea that drives Willy in that money and material wealth is what defines success. After Biff grown up, he realized that he now needs to find his own values in life.

#### 3.1.1.4 Language

The change of language can be seen in the way Willy spoken. When he was young and success, he speaks in full of spirit and optimistic. Then his language became neutral and pesimistic.

WILLY : *I got as far as a little above Yonkers. I stopped for a cup of coffee. Maybe it was the coffee.*  
(*Death of a Salesman*, 1949:5)

### 3.1.2 Depiction of Cultural Change

#### 3.1.2.1 The change of elements of culture classified in the table below:

Table 1. The Change of Elements of Culture

No.	Elements of Culture	Former	Later
1.	Tools and Equipment Life a. Productive Tools  b. Clothes c. Housing d. Tools of Transportation	Washing manually by hands  The new suit The new house The new car	Using washing machine  The old suit The old house The old car
2.	Livelihood System	Success Salesman	Bankrupt Salesman
3.	System of Kinship and Social Organization a. Norms  b. Values	Respect of Children to Parents Materialistic	Dare to parents  Natural
4.	Language	Cheerfull and full of slang words	Neutral

#### 3.1.2.2 Through the Setting

Setting is an environment or surrounding in which an event or story takes place. It may provide particular information about placement and timing. The setting of *Death of a Salesman* takes place in New York and Boston. The Lomans live in Brooklyn, and most of the play's action occurs at Willy Loman's house.

House is one of the change in drama *Death of a Salesman*. In the past, the Brooklyn neighborhood in which the Lomans live was nicely removed from the bustle of New York City. There was space within the neighborhood for expansion and for a garden.

The setting symbolically displays the difference in Willy's life between the past to the present. The setting that represents the past is symbolic of the chance for growth and hope.

### 3.1.2.3 Through the Character/ Characterization

Arthur Miller uses Willy, Biff and Happy Loman to represent the cultural change that happened in the drama. In Willy's character, Miller wants to illustrate the spirit of America dream. However, Willy has a slip by doing an affair with a woman. Biff who was educated by Willy with the wrong concept of America Dream, has changed to the right track by following his own principle. Happy as the second son has the disadvantage that he was neglected by Willy. However Happy becomes the child who Willy wants to be. He has a job where he is making a decent amount of money, his own apartment, and car.

### 3.1.2.4 Through the Plot

In the *Death of a Salesman* contained some events which explain that the characters of the drama have conflict which create the change, they are when Biff found Willy had an affair, Willy got fired, Willy kicks Biff and Happy out of the house, and Willy's death. When Biff found Willy had an affair, it destroys Biff's idol to an ideal father. It becomes a turning point in Biff's life to change his life. When Willy got fired, he becomes frustrated and it is the event that Willy is a fail salesman. After got fired Willy becomes upset and finally he kicks Biff and Happy. The last event is Willy's suicide in order to get insurance. By using money from the insurance Biff and Happy can begin a new business to get a better life.

### 3.1.2.5 Through the Style

Arthur Miller depicted the cultural change of his characters through his style which seem simple but sometimes verbose as the classic work in general. He uses *diction*, *imagery*, and *accent* in depicting the cultural change. Almost all the characters in *Death of a Salesman* speak in a vernacular language full of colloquial and slang words. Their language reflects all the directness, humor and pain of working-class people.

### 3.1.3 Arthur Miller's Concern Cultural Change

The reason why Arthur Miller address cultural change in *Death of a Salesman* is to reveal the culture change that happened in America since the Great Depression until World War II. Arthur Miller wants to give allusion to the loss of work ethic and moral values of the American people on the younger generation.

Arthur Miller wrote his play *Death of a Salesman* in 1949 when America had suffered from World War II. However, the play shows that Miller interested in the influences of the past. Miller grew up during the Great Depression. His father went out of business, and his early life was riddled with economic problems. Great Depression was happened in 1929 and had change the culture in America. The change happened very large and long lasting until the end of World War II.

## 3.2 Discussion

*Death of a Salesman* is an America's tragedy and it is greatest work of Arthur Miller which successfully led him to won numerous awards including the Pulitzer Prize. In the play *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller featuring the main character of the common man named Willy Loman who changed his career as a salesman, but ended in failure and frustration. The characters who experience the cultural change are Willy, Biff and Happy. All of them experiencing the cultural change by the elements of cultural. Willy changed because of his failure in his job as a salesman and his function as a father. It makes him frustrated and decided to suicide.

Biff changed in his values toward future and his dream. Biff no longer concerned with the appearance and the like but is more concerned with freedom and hard work on the farm.

The other character who change is Happy. Eventhough he was abandoned by Willy, he could proof that he could be the dream as his father always demand from Biff.

Arthur Miller wrote this drama to criticize about consumerism in that era. Consumerism could change the society's way of life and ambition to fulfill the

misinterpreted American dream after the Great Depression. Consumerism as a product of capitalism can change the value of America dream.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the writer finds out that there are the conclusion as the answer of the problem statements. Firstly, the drama delivers four elements of culture, those are tools and equipment life, livelihood system, the system of kinship and social organization, and language. The change of culture could happen if there is alteration in the indicators of culture. The tools and equipment life that change are productive tools, livelihood system, housing, and tools of transportation. Secondly, is cultural change in *Death of a Salesman*. The cultural change issue has depicted implicitly by Arthur Miller. He pictured it through the change of Indicators of Culture, setting, character, plot, and style. Thirdly, explaining the reason why cultural change addressed in *Death of a Salesman*. The cultural change addressed in this play because it is a social issue, which always happened in our environment. Miller wants to show the cultural change that happened in America since the Great Depression until post World War II.

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